

Whittaker-Hoffman House
Southeast corner of North Front and Green Streets
Kingston
Ulster County
New York

HABS No. NY-5556

HABS,
NY,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HABS No. NY-5556

WHITTAKER-HOFFMAN HOUSE

Location: Southeast corner of North Front and Green Streets, Kingston, Ulster County, New York.

Latitude 41° 56' 05" Longitude 74° 01' 24"

Present Owner and Occupant: The Salvation Army.

Present Use: Storage and classrooms.

Significance: This structure is an example of a large rubble residence which started as a small construction in the seventeenth century, was rebuilt and incorporated additions as required by successive owners. The house was owned and occupied by the Hoffman family from 1707 to 1908.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION:

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The original part of the house was built before 1700. The house was destroyed in the conflagration of Kingston in 1777 by the British Army and was rebuilt circa 1778 by the Hoffman family.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Edward Whittaker, the earliest known occupant of the site at the southeast corner of Green and North Front Streets (from Abstract of Albany Patents, II, page 72), was an English soldier who settled in Kingston before 1670 and was active in village affairs in the following years (Dutch Records, volumes 1,2,3). In December 1677 or 1678, Whittaker had a barn built (Dutch Records, volume 2, page 410). On October 29, 1679, he sold the lot with a barn on it to John Hammel (Hamble), and included a clause in the record of the sale stating that if "the purchaser likes the house he shall receive the same and pay for it after appraisal" (Dutch Records, volume 2, page 263).

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1683 Deed: 3 April 1683, Unrecorded: mentioned in the
1698 Deed to the property.
Edward Wittaker (Whittaker)
to
John Hamble (Hammel)

1698 Deed: 3 May 1698, Recorded: no date
liber AA, page 180
John Hamble (spelled Hammell in the signature)
to
John Gasherie
Stephen Gasherie

1701/2 Deed: 23 February 1701/2, Recorded: no date
liber AA, page 267
Stephanus Gasherie and
Engsltie, his wife
to
Hilgonda van Slichtenhorst
"half part of that certaine house & Lott"

1702 Deed: 27 May 1702, Recorded: no date
liber AA, page 270b
Stephanus Gasherie
Hilgonda van Slichtenhorst
to
John Gasherie

1702 Mortgage: 30 May 1702, Recorded: no date
liber AA of deeds, page 271
John Gasherie and
Judith, his wife
to
Moses Cantin
In margin: "Received of Anthony Crespell on
and of the morgage in the other side ye sune of
twenty three pounds. Kingston May ye 23: 1707.

Moyse Cantain
"Received of Nicolas Hoffman ye remaining of the
payment of morgage being three to twenty pounds as
also ye Interest in full received by me the 24th May
1709.

Moyse Cantain"

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- 1707 Deed: 5 November 1707, Recorded: no date
liber BB, page 83
Antoin Crespell
to
Jannetie Hofman, wife of
Nicolas Hofman
- 1908 Deed: 11 June 1908, Recorded: 1 July 1908
liber 411, page 369
Ralph Davis Clearwater
Mary Francis Hoffman Clearwater, his wife
Charles Hoffman,
Esther Hoffman, his wife
Cornelia Tremper Hoffman Case
"the only heirs at law and next of kin of:"
Ira Hoffman
Walter Hoffman
Mary Hoffman Reynolds
Elizabeth Hoffman Burhans
"all of whom are now deceased."
to
The Salvation Army
4. Builder, contractor suppliers: Not known.
5. Original plan and construction: Before 1707, all deeds simply refer to a house and lot. The 1707 deed states that it was a stone house.
Judging from appearances, the earliest section of the building is the southwest corner where a structure, one room in plan, is constructed on grade so that its floors are a few feet higher than in the rest of the building. Tradition has it that part of the house served as a fort and that this section may have served as some sort of lookout in addition to being a residence. The position of the building back from the stockade and within the street pattern suggests, however, that the primary function of the building was a residence, not a fortification.
The second stage in the development of the house appears to have been the addition directly to the north of the first part. Who made this addition or when is unknown.
Finally, the section of the house to the east of the first two sections was added. Again, there are no known dates that can be definitely ascribed to this addition. Some sources, (Old Ulster, Volume VII, number 2, page 33. Commemorative Biographical Record, page 502) however, say that Anthony or

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more often Nicolas Hoffman built the house, so they could be responsible for substantial enlargements.

6. Alterations and additions: On October 16, 1777, the house was destroyed in the conflagration of Kingston by the British Army. The Hoffmans evidently rebuilt the house circa 1778. Since timber planks incorporated in the west chimney base and beams in the central wall adjoining that chimney show no char marks, the rebuilding probably included chimneys and some masonry.

There are numerous seam lines in the masonry showing changed window sizes, doors changed to windows, and additions, all apparently quite early.

In the mid-nineteenth century the brick addition to the rear of the building was added. The basement of this addition was used for some time as the kitchen and contained an iron cook stove and bathtub as late as the early 1920s. The front door and the front porch were added sometime in the late nineteenth century, judging from their appearance. Around the turn of the twentieth century the wooden shingle roof shown in early photographs was replaced with a seamed tin roof.

The Salvation Army built a small brick recreation building on the east of the house around 1924. About 1938 there was a fire the extent of which can be seen in extensive charred wood in the east end of the attic. The front porch was damaged by a snow storm and was removed in the spring of 1971. During the winter of 1971-72 the roof structure was reinforced and a temporary tarpaper roof was put on the front. At that time the east chimney was removed above the roofline.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Edward Whittaker was an English soldier who came to the Kingston area before 1670 in the employ of the Duke of York. He was known to have owned land and lived in Kingston as early as 1670. He was active in village affairs.

The Hoffmans owned and occupied the house for 201 years. Nicolas Hoffman, the first member in his family to own the house, was a blacksmith. Anthony Hoffman, son of Nicolas, was also a blacksmith. In addition, he served for many years as a Trustee of Kingston, was a signer of the "Articles of Confederation", 1775, owned large estates in Ulster and Dutchess Counties, was elected a member of the Provincial Congress of New York City in 1774, was appointed a Judge of Dutchess County in 1777, and was one of the regents of the University of New York in 1780. Abraham Hoffman, son of Anthony, was also a blacksmith. Abraham, Junior, was a farmer, as were the last Hoffmans to occupy the house, Edgar, Ira and Walter.

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During and after the Revolutionary War, General George Washington and his staff frequently rode past the Hoffman house. On such one occasion, a daughter of the family caught instant attention of the young officers while sitting in the stoop at the front door. "The glances of the young officers were too much for the maiden who precipitately fled indoors disclosing a well-turned ancle (ankle). 'My God, what an ancle' , ejaculated Washington, always quick to perceive and appreciate feminine charms". (from Eberlein, Harold Donaldson. The Manors and Historical Homes of the Hudson Valley, page 253).

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views:

An old photograph, from an unknown source, shows the north (front) and west facades, with wooden shingles and an enclosed porch. The photograph probably dates from the early 1890s or before. Included in the HABS collection.

An old postcard with the inscription, "DE WALL TAVERN AND HOFFMAN HOUSE. OLD REVOLUNTIONERY HOUSES, KINGSTON, N.Y.", shows north (front) and west facades with wooden shingles and an enclosed porch. The postcard probably dates from before the 1890s. Included in the HABS collection.

An old postcard with the inscription "HOFFMAN HOUSE ON NORTH FRONT STREET, 265 YEARS OLD (ONE OF THE MOST HISTORIC PROPERTIES IN ULSTER CO.), KINGSTON, N.Y." shows the north (front) and east facades. The east facade is now covered by another structure. The photograph is dated early 1900s when a seamed tin roof was put on the house. Included in the HABS collection.

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary and published sources:

Abstract of Albany Patents

Deeds, County Clerk's Office, Ulster County Office Building, Kingston, New York

Translation of Dutch Records, Dingman Versteeg, translator, County Clerk's Office, Ulster County Office Building, Kingston, New York.

Interview, Mrs. Theodore L. Halstead, 27 Boulder Avenue, Kingston, New York. Mrs. Halstead came to live in the house in 1918 as a Captain in the Salvation Army.

b. Secondary and published sources:

Eberlein, Harold Donaldson. The Manors and Historic Homes of the Hudson Valley. Philadelphia and London: J.B. Lippincott and Company, 1924.

Hoes, Roswell Randall. Notes in the Senate House Museum collection.

Reynolds, Helen Wilkinson. Dutch Houses in the Hudson Valley Before 1776.

Schoonmaker, Marius. The History of Kingston, New York. New York, 1888.

Sylvester, Nathaniel Bartlett. History of Ulster County, New York. Philadelphia, 1880.

Commemorative Biographical Record of Ulster County, New York. Chicago, 1896.

Olde Ulster. Kingston, New York, 1902-1914.

Prepared by: William C. Badger
Historian
Historic American
Buildings Survey
Summer 1972

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is an excellent example of a large rubble house which started as a smaller structure and incorporated many additions as the needs of the builder and successive owners required. The house is now connected to nineteenth and twentieth century additions on the east and south sides.
2. Condition of fabric: The house is in poor condition.

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B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The stone part of this house measures 60' -9" (five-bay front) 33' -4" with a rear brick ell which is 9' -8" x 20' -1". The house is two-and-a-half stories with a basement. The ell addition is two stories.
2. Foundation: The house sits on a stone foundation.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: The house has rubble walls with clay and hair mortar. In the early 1900s the exterior walls were covered with a brownish-red wash. The ell addition is brick which was once painted and scored with painted mortar joints. There are indications of paint on the stone portion in spots.
4. Structural system, framing: The house is supported by stone and brick exterior walls.
5. Porch: A roofed front porch once covered the stoop. This porch was removed as a result of a snowstorn in 1971. A recent wood and stone step is presently on the house.
6. Chimneys: There are three chimneys on the house. Two are between the rooms on either side of the entrance hall. The other is at the south end of the ell. The east chimney no longer raises above the roof.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The front door is a large four-paneled door with moldings. Above it is a rectangular transom. The rear doorway has indications of having been divided, and has a plain beaded board and batten door. Above it is a large rectangular transom of crude design.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Wooden double-hung windows on the first floor are twelve-over-twelve light sash. Row of four windows which light the attic space are casement nine lights. No shutters remain, although old iron hinge bases still exist. The old photographic views of the house, included in the HABS collection, all show the house with its shutters. Basement lights once had iron or wood bars.

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8. Roof:

The roof is gabled and is partially covered with seamed tin. The front slope has a temporary tarpaper cover at the present time. The house originally had wooden shingles.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: The basements to this building were divided up as the house expanded. The core room is at the southwest corner of the basement. The basement northwest room is four risers down from the core room. The areas of the house to the east are seven risers down from the core basement and consist of two large rectangular areas. The southeast room has an exterior door which is now almost completely below grade. There is a nineteenth century ell on the rear southwest portion of the house that has a full basement the same level and is entered from the core room. From the basement of this portion there is access to the ground level by an enclosed stair.
- b. First floor: The entrance to the house leads into a central hall that runs through to the rear of the structure. This hall has an addition jutting out into it from the adjacent northwest room and behind that are the stairs to the loft and to the basement core room. The four principal rooms are more or less squarely located off the main hall, two on either side. They are separated from each other by fireplace walls. These rooms are all on the same level except the core room which is five risers above. The nineteenth century addition is entered from this room and is one step above. This addition is divided into two rooms by a lath and plaster partition at this level. A flight of stairs in the southwest corner of this room leads to the basement.
- c. Loft area: This area is entered from the stairs that lead from the rear entrance hall into the center of the space. The loft is divided by a change of level approximately three feet above the area of the core room.

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The rest of the space is screened by deteriorating studs with planks nailed to them in a temporary fashion. The loft area over the nineteenth century ell is inaccessible.

2. Stairways: Wooden stairs of plain design in several locations are short with few risers to negotiate many changes of level. There are no open stairs.
3. Flooring: Wide heavy wood plank floor is found throughout the stone portion of the building, including the core room. The first and second floors of the ell addition have smaller tongue-and-groove plank flooring. There is no flooring on the basement floor, although there is some indication that the east rooms once had stone floors.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The stone walls which define the house's rectangular shape are plastered on the interior. Most rooms in the house and the ell addition have stud walls with wood lath and plaster. The wall between the northwest room and the core room in the first floor has hand hewn studs with brick nogging. The walls in the upper loft have studs covered with boards. There is an arched stone support in the basement. The storeroom near the staircase in the first floor hall is sheathed in wooden panels. The stair landing area leading to the loft is surrounded by similar panels. These panels are original. The east rooms in the first floor have modern paneling.

The ceilings consist of exposed floor boards and joists in the stone portion and plastered wood lath in the ell addition.

5. Doorways and doors: The paneled doors are in the first floor northwest room with its openings framed by moldings. Doors throughout the house vary in size, but most are proportionately short in relation to their height.
6. Decorative features and trim: The northwest room in the first floor has simple trim. The fireplace mantels in the first floor east rooms have cyma recta cornices under the shelves with slightly pulvinated friezes and surrounding trim.
7. Notable Hardware: Several doors have notable strap hinges of wrought-iron. Some original door handles of wrought-iron still exist in the house.

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8. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating: There are fireplaces in most of the principal rooms except the core room in the first floor. The fireplace opening in the basement of the ell addition is completely blocked up. The east rooms' fireplaces are temporarily boarded with plywood.
- b. Lighting: Incandescent lighting is found throughout the house, except in the northeast room which has modern fluorescent lights.

D. Site:

1. General setting: The house faces north on the southeast corner of the junction of North Front and Green Streets.
2. Attachment: The original building is next to another structure to the east which is the headquarters of the Salvation Army.

Prepared by: William C. Badger
Historian
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Survey
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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) under joint sponsorship of the National Park Service and the Kingston Historic Landmarks Preservation Commission with financial assistance from the New York Council on the Arts. Measured and drawn during the summer of 1972 under the direction of John Poppeliers, chief of HABS and under the supervision of Roy Eugene Graham (University of Texas at Austin) by student architects Philip D. Ward (University of Washington), A. Carol Boerder (University of Texas at Austin), M. Morgan Gick (University of Notre Dame), and Stephen O. Fildes (Texas Tech University). The drawings were edited in December 1972 by architect John Burns. The written architectural and historical data was prepared by William C. Badger (University of Pennsylvania), the project historian, and edited in January 1980 by Susan McCown, a historian in the HABS office. The photos were taken in August 1973 by Jack E. Boucher of HABS staff.